

ΦΟΡΕΑΣ ΥΛΟΠΟΙΗΣΗΣ

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ΣΥΜΒΑΣΗ

«ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΟΣ ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΞΗΣ ΓΙΑ ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΙΚΗ ΜΕΛΕΤΗ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΙΚΩΝ ΕΠΙΠΤΩΣΕΩΝ (STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT) ΤΩΝ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΩΝ ΣΥΝΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΣ INTERREG 2021-2027»
ΚΑΙ ΕΙΔΙΚΟΤΕΡΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΣ ΣΥΝΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΣ «ΕΛΛΑΔΑ-ΚΥΠΡΟΣ 2021-2027»



ΣΤΑΔΙΟ ΜΕΛΕΤΗΣ:
ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΙΚΗ ΜΕΛΕΤΗ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΙΚΩΝ ΕΠΙΠΤΩΣΕΩΝ (ΣΜΠΕ) ΤΟΥ
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Το Πρόγραμμα συγχρηματοδοτείται από το
Ευρωπαϊκό Ταμείο Περιφερειακής Ανάπτυξης
της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης



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1 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY OF THE ENTIRE STUDY

1.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The present Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Report (SEA), is prepared in the framework of the Strategic Environmental Assessment procedure in accordance with the contents of Directive 2001/42/EC for the environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes. Its objective is the ex-ante environmental impact assessment of the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programme INTERREG VI-A "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027".

This report is the 2nd Deliverable of the project "Consultant for writing: Report for the strategic environmental assessment of Territorial Cooperation Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027". The Managing Authority of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, of MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS, assigned this project to EEO GROUP Independent consultancy.

The aim of this deliverable is to assure a high level of environmental protection, via the assessment of the potential impact of the programme, and the adoption of countermeasures at this early stage of decision-making.

1.2 INTERREG VI-A PROGRAMME GREECE-CYPRUS 2021-2027

The area of cross-border cooperation of the INTERREG VI-A Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027", includes three NUTS II regions for Greece (Regions of Crete, North Aegean and South Aegean), while for Cyprus the eligible region is the whole country (NUTS I) .

The implementation area of the new INTERREG VI-A Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2020", is the most southeastern territorial unit, which operates as an entry/exit gate of the EU. It is bordered by eight (8) countries, one of which is a candidate country (Turkey) and the other seven (7) countries are EU neighbors (Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt and Libya) and receive financial assistance by the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), thus the implementation area This makes it the only EU cross-border region bordered by two continents (Africa and Asia).



Figure 1 1: The application area of the Programme for the period 2021-2027

In the light of the needs of the cross-border area highlighted by the public debate, as well as the mapped challenges arising from them and the SWOT analysis carried out in the design of the Programme, the competent Planning Committee selected the Policy Objectives SP2 (A greener Europe), SP4 (A more social Europe) and the Interreg 2 Specific Objective (ISO 2) (Greater Security and Protection in Europe). Following the path of the Public Consultation after the previous selection, the Strategy of the Programme concerns the economic and social development of the cross-border cooperation area through the strengthening of the protection of the natural environment, the adaptation to climate change and the promotion of culture, sustainable tourism and social economy.

More specifically, the Strategy of the Programme specialized in the Specific Objectives, which relate to the fields of energy, climate change, natural environment, tourism and culture, employment and migration. In the above context, the following priorities have been set, which will be the policy framework to be implemented through the Cooperation Programme for the development and protection of the intervention area:

- 1st Priority [P1]: Protection of the natural environment, adaptation to climate change with efficient green energy, prevention of risks and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 2nd Priority [P2]: Promoting socio-economic development through the strengthening of culture, sustainable tourism and the social economy.
- 3rd Priority [P3]: Greater security and protection in the intervention area, through more effective integration of refugees and migrants.

The following table summarizes the Priorities and Specific Objectives of the Programme.

Table 1 1: Programme by priority and specific objective

Priority	Specific Objective
Q1: Protect the natural environment, adapt to climate change with efficient green energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions	i) Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
	iv) Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster prevention, and resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches
	vii) Strengthen the protection and conservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reduce all forms of pollution
Q2: Promoting socio-economic development through the strengthening of culture, sustainable tourism and the social economy	(i) Enhancing the efficiency and capacity of labor markets and access to quality jobs through the development of social infrastructure and the promotion of the social economy
	vi) Strengthening the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation
Q3: Greater security and protection in the intervention area, through more effective integration of refugees and migrants	iii) Protection and integration of migrants (including refugees)

The table below shows the total funding by fund and national co-financing.

Table 1 2: Programme Budget

Policy Objective	Priority	Fund	EU contribution	National contribution	Total	Co-financing rate
SP 2	Priority 1 (60%)	ERDF	27.594.728	6.898.682	34.493.410	80%
SP4	Priority 2 (35%)	ERDF	16.096.925	4.024.232	20.121.157	80%
Specific Objective Interreg 2 (ISO 2)	Priority 3 (5%)	ERDF	2.299.561	574.890	2.874.451	80%
	Total	ERDF	45.991.214	11.497.804	57.489.018	80%

1.3 ALTERNATIVES

In the context of the present study, the comparative analysis of the alternative possibilities of shaping the INTERREG VI-A Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027" was performed. In particular, the following possibilities were considered:

- Do nothing scenario (Alternative -1):** based on this scenario, the current provision context remains, without the adoption and implementation of a Programme.
- Alternative 2 (Alternative -2):** this solution concerns the implementation of the Programme, as it is described in detail in Chapter 4 of the SEA.

From an operational point of view, Alternative 2 was proved to be preferable, since the utilization of the resources of the Cross-Border Area Programme is expected to significantly reheat the local economy, ultimately resulting in substantial improvements in citizens' well-being indicators. The renunciation of these resources, apart from the developmental lag, will keep social and economic welfare at current level and the opportunities for its improvement will be missed.

In addition, from an environmental point of view, Alternative 2 was proved to be preferable, since it is expected to contribute to the following:

- Protecting the natural environment, adapting to climate change with efficient green energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Promoting socio-economic development through the strengthening of culture, sustainable tourism and the social economy
- Greater security and protection in the intervention area, through more effective integration of refugees and migrants.

The Alternative 1 (Do nothing scenario), from an environmental point of view, was proved to be unacceptable, because:

- its overall impact will be the development lag, which will lead to environmental degradation trends, according to the modern approach of development and environment connection,
- concerning particularly the investment in environmental infrastructure, the loss of the relevant funds leads to missing the opportunity to counterbalance the environmental pressures, without the realistic possibility of filling the gap by other investments by the two countries.

1.4 POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PARAMETERS IN CASE OF NOT IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

Assessing the current situation of the environment in the cross-border area, both in terms of the state of the environmental media and the pressures exerted, and the development planning, the following conclusions are drawn:

The situation of the environment is encouraging, concerning the majority of the environmental components of the cross-border area. The carrying capacity of the environment has not been exhausted and the main natural factors shaping the environment contribute to the preservation of flora, fauna, biodiversity, water and other important environmental media at a satisfactory level. This trend does not seem to be at stake in the foreseeable future.

1. In addition to the favorable natural conditions, the encouraging state of the environment is mostly due to the active protection measures, most of which have been implemented in previous programming periods. At the same time, the evolution of the environmental law, together with the strengthening of environmental awareness, have contributed to the redirection of the production and development activities to more environmentally compatible framework.
2. Despite the encouraging general situation of the environment, some fields lag behind, the most characteristic of them being:
 - the efficient and correct solid waste management,
 - the treatment of liquid waste and the consequent protection of the receiving waters,
 - the water resources management,
 - the energy saving.

The delays in the above fields are related to the insufficiency of the resources allocated for the implementation of relevant projects and the lack of awareness of the relevant environmental directions to date.

3. In addition to the above, another identified problem mostly stems from institutional weakness concerning complex issues. In particular, there are delays in controlling the expansion of anthropogenic interventions in "unapproachable" natural areas, although mild, and in restraining the over-exploitation of certain natural resources tendency.

At the same time, from the detailed analysis of the current environment, local pressures are identified, which in some cases are quite intense. The national and European trend of continuous environmental improvement, which is reflected, among other things, in increasingly detailed and stricter legal regulations, is expected to alleviate these pressures to some extent.

In conclusion:

The non-implementation of the proposed Programme will lead to conditions of unsustainable development of the cross-border area, with consequent implications on both the natural environment (protected areas, landscape, etc.) and the anthropogenic and the economic environment.

1.5 PROGRAMME COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF "DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM"

In the context of the SEA, the compliance of the INTERREG VI-A Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027" with the principle "DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM" was evaluated. This means that the Programme is designed in a way that does not significantly harm any of the six environmental objectives of the EU Classification Regulation. EU classification is a scientific classification system for

determining whether an (economic) activity can be considered environmentally sustainable. It sets out six environmental objectives:

- Mitigation of climate change
- Adaptation to climate change
- The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources
- The transition to the circular economy
- Pollution prevention and control
- The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

It was concluded that the objectives of the Programme fall within the scope of the Funds, comply with the EU environmental acquis, and ensure the compatibility of the Programme with the principle of "DO NO SIGNIFICANT HARM". In addition, the actions of the Programme are compatible with the framework of the recovery and resilience mechanism because:

(a) they lead to investments and reforms that:

- contribute to the effective address of the challenges identified in the relevant specific recommendations of the two countries
- contain measures that effectively contribute to the green and digital transition
- contribute to the growth potential enhancement, the job creation and the economic and social resilience of the cross-border area.

(b) they include investments in the following areas:

- Protecting the natural environment, adapting to climate change with efficient green energy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Promoting socio-economic development through the strengthening of culture, sustainable tourism and the social economy
- Greater security and protection in the intervention area, through more effective integration of refugees and migrants.

1.6 COMPOSITION OF STUDY CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the findings of the present study, in the regulatory act of environmental approval of the INTERREG VI-A Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027", it is proposed the following provisions to be included:

SECTION A:

In the INTERREG VI-A Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027", the following priorities were set, which will be the policy framework implemented through the Cooperation Programme for the development and protection of the intervention area:

1st Priority [P1]: Protection of the natural environment, adaptation to climate change with efficient green energy, risk prevention and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The action categories of Priority 1 are the following:

a) *Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions*

- Innovative actions to promote energy upgrading and more efficient use of energy of buildings (especially energy-intensive) – pilot applications of efficient energy management, due to the use of specialized equipment (e.g. oxygen production in hospitals, etc.) - **Expected Contribution:** *Reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, promotion of energy efficiency & autonomy*
- Pilot actions to strengthen energy communities - **Expected Contribution:** *Reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, promotion of ideas of sustainability and sustainability*
- Pilot actions for the utilization of new technologies and RES in the primary sector and the processing of agricultural products, promotion of mild cultivation practices (reduction of fertilizers, medicines, etc.) - **Expected Contribution:** *Reduction of dependence on fossil fuels and reduction of emissions of mainly methane and ammonia*

b) *Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches*

- Development of nature-based solutions to protect ecosystems (Forest, Agricultural, Wetlands, Coastal and Marine) from the risks of climate change - **Expected Contribution:** *Mitigation and adaptation to climate change, increased resilience to disasters*
- Risk prevention and disaster protection actions (e.g. floods, fires, desertification, coast erosion) - **Expected Contribution:** *Increased coordination and cooperation of stakeholders for joint disaster management and prevention (natural and anthropogenic)*

c) *Strengthening the protection and conservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution*

- Measures and actions for the protection of the natural environment and biodiversity from non-indigenous invasive species - **Expected Contribution:** *Protection of the natural environment, prevention of risks of natural disasters*
- Offshore data collection and delivery activities through the WEBGIS platform to provide data to a wide range of user groups, inform citizens and improve their access to information and knowledge - **Expected Contribution:** *Protection and sustainable use of the marine environment & ecosystem*
- Actions for the protection, restoration and promotion of species, habitats and protected areas / urban greenery - **Expected Contribution:** *Protection of the natural environment, conservation of biodiversity*
- Actions to reduce inputs from other production processes, to the environment and biodiversity - **Expected Contribution:** *Protection of the natural environment.*

Priority 2 [P2]: Promoting socio-economic development through the strengthening of culture, sustainable tourism and the social economy.

The action categories of Priority 2 are the following:

a) *Enhancing the efficiency and capacity of labor markets and access to quality jobs through the development of social infrastructure and the promotion of the social economy*

- Support structures for people with disabilities - **Expected contribution:** *Inclusion and integration of people with disabilities in all social structures.*

b) Strengthening the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

- Actions to promote various and innovative forms of alternative tourism (agritourism, ecotourism, marine and underwater tourism, wellness tourism, etc.) and tourism utilization of existing sites / infrastructure (traditional shipyard, old abandoned facilities of traditional production methods, etc. - **Expected Contribution:** *Enhancing sustainability in tourism, creating new cash flows and highlighting the blue cultural heritage*
- Actions to ensure accessibility for all groups of the population, especially the most vulnerable (elderly and disabled), in areas and infrastructures of tourist and cultural interest - **Expected Contribution:** *Ensuring equal treatment, social inclusion and adaptation of businesses to sustainable tourism.*
- Synergies and complementary actions for the utilization of innovative technologies for the promotion of areas of touristic & environmental interest and the tour in them (e.g. natural beauty areas, Mediterranean routes, traditional settlements, landmarks, geoparks, shipwrecks, underwater sites, aquariums, etc.) (e.g. through BIM methodology - Building Information Modeling) - **Expected Contribution:** *Strengthening the role of culture in economic development, sustainability of tourism.*
- Synergies and complementary actions for the revival, representation and dissemination of the intangible cultural heritage and cultural evidence (e.g. folk tradition, greek mythology, cultural events, customs, artistic events, activities, etc.), as well as modern culture (performing arts / visual arts etc.) - **Expected Contribution:** *Strengthening the role of culture in economic development, sustainability of tourism.*

Priority 3 [P3]: Greater security and protection in the intervention area, through more effective integration of refugees and migrants.

The action categories of Priority 3 are:

a) Protection and integration of migrants (including refugees)

- Integrated border surveillance system of the sea field of the cross-border area, strengthening of naval and air surveillance means, strengthening of the information and communication systems - **Expected contribution:** *More immediate and targeted intervention of the port authorities in the presence of migration and refugee flows.*

SECTION B:

The evaluation of the environmental impact of the INTERREG VI-A Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027" led to the following conclusions.

1. Concerning fauna, flora and tangible assets, no strategic level changes are expected from the implementation of the Programme.
2. The situation concerning:

- the environmental impact on human health,
- the living conditions of the population,
- the ground,
- the waters,
- the air
- the landscape
- the biodiversity
- the climatic factors
- the cultural heritage and
- the multimodal pressures on the environment

is expected to improve during and after the implementation of the Programme, due to the significant care and the corresponding goals and resources provided in the Cooperation Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027" about these issues.

3. No environmental parameter is expected to deteriorate due to the implementation of the INTERREG VI-A Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027", therefore active measures are not required at the current, early design level.

SECTION C:

In order to monitor the impact of the INTERREG VI-A Programme "Greece-Cyprus 2021-2027", a biennial report and a final monitoring report will be prepared, at the end of the programming period, according to the content and structure to be defined by the competent National Authorities. The monitoring process will employ mainly indicators referring to the main environmental changes that may be caused by the Programme. The choice of the indicators system will be determined by the competent design authorities of the Programme in consultation with the competent environmental authorities.



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